

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

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### Witness Statement

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Congressman Bob Riley  
Testimony before the Subcommittee on  
Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans  
June 8, 2000

Mr. Chairman, I am here to testify in support of H.R. 4286, a bill to establish the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge. This vital natural Wildlife Refuge is located in Bibb County, Alabama which traverses my district and that of my friend and colleague, Spencer Bachus.

As a sportsman and a grandfather, I understand the importance of protecting our endangered ecosystems. Like my fellow Alabamians, I have enjoyed the unspoiled beauty the Cahaba River, and I want to ensure the continued health of this tremendously diverse river. That is why it is with great enthusiasm that I join my colleague, Congressman Bachus, in introducing this legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to share some relevant facts about the Cahaba River basin with the Committee.

The Cahaba River runs through five counties in Central Alabama. Presently, the 131 species found in the main stem of the Cahaba may be the greatest concentration of fish biodiversity per-square-mile of any river in the United States. In addition, there are thirteen species found nowhere else in the world.

As it winds it way south of metropolitan Birmingham, deficient water quality and habitat quality have made the Cahaba much less inhabitable for the indigenous species living downstream. The reasons behind the significant decrease in number are many and varied. These include spawning disruption due to damming of the river. Other species have been negatively affected by water quality degradation, siltation, and habitat destruction.

As previously stated, within the boundaries of the proposed National Wildlife Refuge there are thirteen species found only in this river, two of which are fish. Furthermore, the refuge would protect an additional twenty-two imperiled fish species that are now thought to be either extinct, significantly declining in number, or otherwise dramatically affected.

Mr. Chairman, the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge will go a long way towards ensuring that the same beautiful river I am fortunate enough to know will be protected for generations to come.

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